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News Release

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Forty Year Quest by Chinese Curator Fulfilled with Acquisition

Gifts by Clevelanders Add to Collection

CLEVELAND (April 8, 2004) — The Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) last month acquired a rare album of 50 leaves from of the 12th century. This *Album of Buddhist and Daoist Themes* (China, Southern Song period, 1127–1279) is a major purchase for the Chinese paintings collection.

This album was seen nearly 40 years ago by Curator of Chinese Art Dr. Ju-hsi Chou as a graduate student at Princeton University. He found the album in the German folio, *Zeichnungen Nach Wu Tao-Tze Aus Der Gőtter- Und Sagenwelt Chinas*, written in 1913 by it's first known owner F. R. Martin (1868–1933), a noted Orientalist in Stockholm.

Dr. Chou's had thought about this album throughout his career until 2000, when he was surprised to find all 50 leaves hanging at an auction at Christie's, New York. However, the Museum was focused on other items at that time and to his amazement, the album did not sell. Dr. Chou exhibited extreme "calmness and patience" between the time he had viewed the album in 2000 to 2004 when the album once again became available. Not wanting to see his life's quest forgotten, he was able to purchase it for the CMA, enriching and giving the Chinese painting collection a new level of prominence.

Dr. Ju-hsi Chou said, "I'm very excited and pleased to have found this album. It has been on my mind for 40 years and now it is in the Museum's collection." Dr. Chou added, "They represent a major monument in the history of Chinese paintings."

Museum Director Katharine Lee Reid said, "The album strengthens our Chinese paintings collection and has been dedicated to Dr. Chou, whose commitment to the collection will resonate throughout the years." Reid added, "The Museum also received generous gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Gow, William and Rose Jurey, an anonymous donor and Huntington Bank which will enhance the prints and photography holdings."

The album can be dated by way of its several styles, to the Southern Song period, 12th to 13th century. This is most clear in the little landscape vignettes, the depiction of birds and flowers and also, more broadly, in the style of figures.

Equally exceptional is the richness of its content. In addition to the depiction of a variety of animals, including the horse, tiger, leopard, deer, buffalo, wolf, alligator, etc., the number of figures depicted in this album total 484.

The 50 leaves encompass three fairly coherent subjects: *Procession of Deities to the Celestial Spheres*, represented in 26 leaves; *The Kings of Hells*, 14 leaves; and *Erlang's Campaign to Rid the Mount Guankou of Dangerous Beasts* ("Soushan Tu"), 10 leaves. While the theme of "procession of deities is common; the number of deities involved, their specific identities and their division into the civic and martial groupings actually has no counterpart elsewhere. The latter two subjects can be seen in frescoes and in scrolls. *The Kings of Hells* theme has parallels in Tang paintings as well as in Chinese scrolls in Japanese

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collections. As for the *Soushan Tu*, its first appearance in the history of art was as a work of Gao Yi (Chinese, 10th century); its use spread during the Southern Song (1127–1279) and Ming (1368–1644) periods.

Given what this series of images represents, it is possible to regard the present album as a preliminary series of drawings for much larger—and more complete sets of works on scrolls and frescoes. The quality of the traditional Chinese brush strokes in the album are indeed incisive, energetic and startlingly refreshing. Its aesthetics lies in the belief that, such simple acts of drawing actually enables the artist to reveal fully his artistic personality without mitigation or interference from such extraneous concerns as tonal gradation or chromatic enrichment.

Contemporary Painting Enters Collection

The Museum received Frank Stella's (American, b. 1936) *Gray Scramble (Single), VIII* (1968), a gift from an anonumous donor to the Contemporary collection. This painting has been on view in gallery 239 since 2003, where it is currently on view and is a fine example of Stella's early geometric color abstraction.

Gift Adds to Photography Collection

The Museum received from Huntington Bank probably the largest known print by Margaret Bourke-White (American, 1904–1971) of her very popular photograph of Terminal Tower, the city's distinctive landmark. This image is 19-7/16 x 14-5/8 inches and was taken from the West Side of the Cuyahoga River looking across the Detroit-Superior Bridge in 1928. When completed in 1927, it was the second tallest building in the United States. Bourke-White documented the tower from various vantage points, at different times of the day and under varied atmospheric conditions. Terminal Tower seems to symbolize Cleveland's industrial power and meteoric rise from a small settlement on the banks of the Cuyahoga River into one of the most modern, progressive cities in America.

Generous Gifts Add to Print Collection

Major gifts to the print collection include 10 color woodcuts and two double-sided wood blocks by little know Cleveland artist Mabel Hewit (American 1903–1987) from her nephew, William Jurey and his wife Rose. This donation increases the Museum's holdings of white-line color woodcuts and makes the CMA the largest holder of Hewit's work. An exhibition of this material is planned for the summer of 2005.

Hewit worked from the 1920s through the 1960s. From Blanche Lazzell (American, 1878 –1956), she learned the white-line color woodcut technique, which allows all colors to be printed from just one carved wood block. Hewit depicted scenes of Provincetown, Mass., the center for color woodcut artists, as well as whimsical and sophisticated figures as seen in *Sun Bathing* (ca. 1935) and *The Jersey Shore* (ca. 1940.) Her works are extremely modern, utilizing a cubist-inspired description of space.

Another gift to the print collection includes 21 color lithographs and three illustrated books by 19th century master printmaker Henri Rivière (French, 1864–1951) from an anonymous donor, which greatly enhances the Museum's collection of Rivière prints. Rivière used the most luminous tones in the sky and water, but could also render a composition in the most sensitive and subtle of shades as seen in *The Beautiful Countryside of Brittany: View of Kermarie* (1912) and *Aspects of Nature: The Woods, in Winter* (1898). With 1890s being the golden age of color lithography in France, artists like Rivière printed lithographs in large editions, making them affordable to the average person who often tacked them to walls, ruining them. Few examples in pristine condition, like those in this gift have survived.

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Gift is First for Museum Holdings

Portrait of Buddhist Monks of Obaku Sect [Chinese, Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)] of the 17th century was given to the Museum by Mr. and Mrs. Robert T. Gow. This hanging scroll features 24 portraits of Buddhist priests, all appear to be members of the same temple or sect. Each portrait features individual facial features of the monks. Dressed in their formal garments; they are arranged in hierarchy with the top most figure being the senior patriarch who is shown seated on a chair with a taller back, holding a *ruyi* in his left hand and with a tall staff. This scroll is the first to enter the Museum's collection featuring this tradition.

Select acquisitions are currently on display in gallery 102.

The Cleveland Museum of Art receives operating support from the Ohio Arts Council.

The Cleveland Museum of Art is one of America's leading comprehensive Museums. Its permanent collection is world renowned for its quality and breadth, spanning 6,000 years. The Museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and art acquisitions. For more information on the Museum, its holdings, programs, services and events, call 1-888-CMA-0033 or visit www.ClevelandArt.org.

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